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ABSTRACT

This guide, which is intended for use by decision makers, administrators, volunteers, teachers, and other educators in fields related to adult literacy, is designed to assist in the development and improvement of transition strategies for students participating in volunteer literacy and adult education programs. Chapter 1 summarizes the draft report on transitions that was written in preparation for the May 1994 national conference "Transitions: Building Better Partnerships between Literacy Volunteer and Adult Education Programs." Presented in chapter 2 are summaries of the following background papers presented at the conference: "Technology as an Instructional Strategy for Program Transitions" (Eunice N. Askov, Barbara H. Van Horn); "Setting Up Transitional Programs through Effective Collaboration: A Practitioner's Point of View" (Carol Clymer-Spradling); "Learner Portfolios to Support Transitions in Adult Education" (Jane Braunger, Sylvia Hart-Landsberg, Stephen Reder); "Strategies for Building Collaborative Relationships and Articulated Programs" (Judith Alamprese). Chapter 3 reports on the following conference activities: National Adult Literacy Survey preconference, opening plenary, workshops, keynote address, strategic agenda setting, strategic design session, report out session, and closing. Presented in chapter 4 are various strategic planning materials, including guiding questions and exercises in developing a vision. (MN)

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Building Partnerships Between Literacy Volunteer and Adult Education Programs

A Guide to Effective Transition Strategies

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This **Guide to Effective Transition Strategies** was developed by the National Alliance of Business (NAB) under a contract with the U.S. Department of Education entitled, **Transitions: Building Better Partnerships Between Literacy Volunteer and Adult Education Programs**. The project began during the fall of 1993 with a review of the literature on adult literacy transitions and culminated with a national conference in Washington, DC on May 15 - 17, 1994. Throughout the project, the objectives have been to: identify critical elements in and effective models of promising transition strategies; provide guidance to state and local adult literacy providers in drafting or improving plans for transition strategies; and disseminate information on the literacy volunteer and the Federally assisted, State-administered adult education network.

The literature review included a wide range of reports, periodicals, newsletters, books, and other related publications. In addition, extensive discussions were held with program administrators, practitioners, teachers, students, volunteers, and other individuals active in the field of adult education and literacy. The review also included an extensive search of the ERIC database.

The conference drew nearly 200 adult literacy providers, adult education and literacy policy experts, and federal and state education officials to Washington for two and a half days of discussion, strategizing and networking. The conference explored issues related to the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey, the use of technology, learner portfolios, and community collaboration as strategies to improve transitions. By the end of the conference, participants had been able to establish common ground and agree upon collective goals. In addition, the conference was useful for many participants as an opportunity to establish or expand the network of individuals committed to improving literacy services for adult students in the U.S.

The purposes of this **Guide** are three-fold:

(1) to compile and summarize the information collected during this project;

(2) to report on the status of effective transition strategies for helping adult students access all available and appropriate volunteer literacy and adult education services; and

(3) to assist in the development and improvement of transition strategies for all students participating in literacy programs.

The **Guide** is intended for decision-makers, administrators, volunteers, teachers, and other educators in related fields. It is hoped that the **Guide** will become a valuable resource for those committed to improving programs that provide adult literacy services in the United States.

The **Guide** contains several different types of information. Chapter I provides a summary of the Draft Report on Transitions that was written in preparation for the National Conference. This Chapter also contains general information on the state of adult education and literacy today and some of the key issues in designing effective transition strategies. Chapter II includes specific information on several transition strategies that are being used in programs currently. Chapter III is a recap of the Conference on Transitions and includes detailed summaries of each of the different sessions that were held during the two and half days. Chapter IV consists of the Strategic Planning Materials that were used during the conference. The final Chapter is a brief summary of the conclusions and recommendations discussed during the conference.

WHAT IS A TRANSITION?

A transition is a passage from one condition, form, stage, activity, or place to another. Specifically, adult literacy transition strategies can help learners progress smoothly along an educational continuum and realize their personal educational and employment goals, to become productive, self-sufficient citizens.

To look at transitional efforts for advancing adult students in educational programs, one should acknowledge the current field of adult education and literacy. This field today is as broad and diverse as the teachers, tutors, students, and communities involved. Adult education and literacy programs include workplace & family literacy, welfare to work, adult basic education, english-as-a-second-language and adult secondary education. This arena, however, has been brought to the forefront over the past several years by several recent events, including the amendments to the Adult Education Act enacted by the National Literacy Act of 1991, the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS), and the passage of The Goals 2000: Educate America Act. These three events are a response to the realization that the lack of basic educational skills prevents our workforce from obtaining the technical skills required to compete in the global marketplace. It has also become clear that we all could benefit from further education, training and retraining i.e. lifelong learning. The need for increased literacy levels of adults who are both outside and already in the workforce so we can become more productive citizens and self-sufficient is clear.

THE NATIONAL LITERACY ACT OF 1991

Our response to this challenge must come from all levels of government as well as from other public and private organizations and individuals. In July of 1991, the National Literacy Act was signed into law. This Act defines literacy as:

"An individual's ability to read, write, and speak in English, and compute and solve problems at levels of proficiency necessary to function on the job and in society, to achieve one's goals, and develop one's knowledge and potential."

The Act makes it easier for volunteer literacy and other community-based organizations to access funds through its "direct and equitable access" provisions. However, the Act also requires that programs receiving federal assistance through the Basic State Grant Program must demonstrate: past effectiveness in providing services to educationally disadvantaged adults; accountability in program efforts (showing learning gains of students); the degree to which they will coordinate and utilize other literacy and social services available in the community; and their commitment to serve individuals in the community most in need of literacy services.

This Act further reinforces the need for collaboration among public and private adult education and literacy programs to avoid costly duplication of effort and competition for limited resources. Finally, it recognizes the valuable role all systems have in ensuring that adult learners have access to programs that are responsive to adult learner needs and that allow them to reach their full potential.

National Adult Literacy Survey

The National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) was conducted by the Educational Testing Service for the National Center on Education Statistics. The survey was conducted during the first eight months of 1992 with a nationally representative sample of 13,600 adults. Twelve states chose to participate in a special study designed to provide state level results comparable to the national data. In addition, 1,100 inmates of some 80 federal and state prisons were included in the survey. Additionally, the survey was amended to include adults 60 years of age and older. In total, over 26,000 adults were surveyed.

The survey consisted of three scales: prose; document; and quantitative. The scales range from 0-500 but were split into five levels for analysis. The results were not encouraging. Twenty-one to twenty-three percent of all adults demonstrated skills in the lowest level on the prose, document and quantitative proficiencies. Translated into population terms, this means that some 40 to 44 million adults nationwide demonstrated skills in the lowest literacy level defined. Another twenty-five to twenty-eight percent of the respondents, representing about 50 million adults nationwide, demonstrated skills in the next higher level or proficiency on each of the three scales. The NALS highlights, among other things, that the availability of adult education and literacy services including volunteer tutorial and small-group instruction is critical.

Goals 2000: Educate America Act

On March 31, 1994, President Clinton signed into law the Goals 2000: Educate America Act. This Act provides resources to states and communities to develop and implement comprehensive education reform aimed at helping all students reach challenging new academic and occupational skill standards. Goals 2000 also codified the National Education Goals and established the National Education Goals Panel and the National Education Standards and Improvement Council to oversee the Nation's progress in reaching the goals. Goal 5 of the Act states:

> *"Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."*

To reach Goal 5, many citizens will need to return to school to further their education. As these students enter and progress through adult education and literacy classes, it is imperative that the full range of educational opportunities be made available to them. To the extent that students are able to access educational services along the entire spectrum of learning, the more students are likely to continue their education.

The Adult Education and Literacy Delivery System

These developments have occurred within a well established yet extremely diffuse adult education and literacy delivery system. The "system" includes Federal, state and local programs, public and private providers, volunteer literacy,

ABE, ESL and ASE education, as well as workplace literacy, family literacy and welfare-to-work programs. The major source of Federal support for basic skills programs is the Adult Education Act, Public Law 100-297, as amended by the National Literacy Act of 1991. The Act supports basic literacy and English as a second Language programs for all eligible adults, who are 16 years of age and over, not currently enrolled in school, and who lack a high school diploma or the basic skills necessary to function effectively on the job and in their daily lives. Funds are allocated to the 57 States and territories on a formula based on the number of adults who have not graduated from high school. States distribute funds to local providers of adult education and literacy services through various processes using State criteria. States are required to match funds for services. Currently, more than 3.7 million students are being served annually in over 3,000 programs at 24,000 learning sites.

The Act also includes a provision for "direct and equitable access" which allows all eligible programs to apply directly to the States for participation in the funding efforts. Those agencies and organizations that may be eligible to participate in this effort include: local education agencies; community-based organizations such as libraries and churches; correctional education agencies; post-secondary institutions; and public or private non-profit agencies. Instructional efforts through this State-administered adult education program include: adult basic education, adult secondary education, English as a second language, and pre-GED programs. Federal funding for basic grants in FY 1994 totalled $261 million. Of the 3.7 million students served in the adult education program last year, about 1.1 million were enrolled in adult secondary education programs, including GED programs; 1.1 million in ESL; and the remainder in programs below the eigth grade level.

The adult education system is also supported by an extensive network of volunteer programs and organizations. Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) and Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) are the primary national providers of volunteer-based literacy instruction. Together they account for more than 150,000 volunteers who provide tutoring and administrative support. Basic literacy instruction and beginning ESL instruction are provided on a one-to-one or small-group basis by tutors trained through the formal LVA or LLA tutor training sequence. In addition, many adult education staff of state-administered programs incorporate LVA or LLA methods and materials. The two nonprofit organizations administer educational programs in a combined total of 1,400 localities nationwide. Cross referral between the voluntary organizations and Adult Education programs is the most common form of cooperation between the voluntary and the Adult Education systems. The use of volunteers in state-funded adult education programs has increased dramatically from 34,000 in 1985 to over 98,000 in 1992. Some, but not all, of these volunteers are included in the 150,000 figure cited above. The chart on the next page indicates the various educational levels used to determine the types of adult education and literacy instructional services provided to adult learners.

TRANSITIONS IN GENERAL

Before we explore, in detail, strategies for helping adult learners access the contin-

uum of educational services available in volunteer literacy tutorial and adult basic education programs, it is helpful to look closely at several other common types of transitions. These transitions can serve as background for examining the transition between volunteer literacy and adult education programs.

School-to-Work. Although the goal of universal literacy in the U.S. refers specifically to the literacy of adults, significant progress toward the goal is dependent to a great extent upon educational experiences prior to adulthood. In recent years there has been concern that too much emphasis has been placed on students going from high school to college and little attention has been given to the students who do not plan to immediately attend a four year college or university. Recently, however, this has been changing. The number of programs that have been developed to meet the school-to-work transition is growing. In some communities, business leaders are entering into a new form of collaboration known as work-education partnerships. Although these work-education partnerships vary by their nature, they share a number of common elements. Successful partnerships use brokers to develop links among all key stakeholders, ensure commitment by developing a sense of ownership among the various organizations, develop formal plans, establish organizations to manage the operation, and cultivate and maintain the partnership.

High School to College. An additional type of transition experience involves students transitioning from high school or work to college. A report prepared by the National Center on Postsecondary Teaching, Learning and Assessment entitled Out of Class Experiences Research Program: The Transition to College Project examined how new college students become aware of and involved in the academic and non-academic learning communities of the campus. The results suggested that the transition was complex and varied according to several factors, including: the expectations of students upon enrollment in college; the support provided by friends and classmates; the students' family relationships; and various types of validation experiences of students to the new environment of colleges.

English as a Second Language. The U.S. Department of Education administers the National English Literacy Transitional Demonstration Program the purpose of

ADULT LITERACY SERVICES BY EDUCATION LEVEL

Beginning ABE	Grades 0 through 5.9
Beginning ESL	Limited or no proficiency in English
Intermediate ABE	Grades 6 through 8.9
Intermediate ESL	Some competence in communicating in English
Adult Secondary Education	Grades 9 through 12.9
Advanced ESL	Able to communicate in English but needs instruction

which is to develop innovative approaches, methods and technologies to help limited English proficient adults and out-of-school youth achieve full competency in English. Transitional ESL programs are designed to help limited English proficient students make the transition from one instructional level to another, from one service provider to another and to prepare them for the literacy demands of vocational education, college transfer or college credit programs. In Fiscal Year 1992, three grantees were selected on a competitive basis. The three grantees were: the Arlington Adult Learning System; the Massachusetts English Literacy Demonstration Project; and the Success Through Transitional English Program. Each grantee was required to create a partnership among service providers that included at least one community-based organization and at least one community college or technical institute. Partnerships could also include other public or private agencies, institutions or organizations.

Special Education. There are also a considerable number of programs that assist disabled students in successfully transitioning to the community environment. A 1991 Survey of State Directors of Special Education found that at least half of the 38 respondents had transitions programs in their school districts. The most identifiable components of these transition programs included interagency cooperative planning, community integration, on-the-job training; vocational rehabilitation counseling and parental involvement.

Welfare-to-Work. Another important transition strategy involves adults participating in welfare-to-work programs under the Job Opportunities and Basic Skills program. Many welfare-to-work programs have been successful because they provide additional services such as child care, transportation, medical insurance, and sometimes funds for clothes, uniforms and tools. In addition, many of these programs are flexible in responding to client needs. For example, in some cases, reimbursement for child care is offered, in others, assistance in finding an appropriate day care home or child care center may be provided. Additionally, many programs give transportation vouchers, reimbursement for gas or for transportation and/or assistance in planning bus or automobile routes. In some cases, Medicaid for welfare recipients can now be continued for twelve months after they start work. Finally, advice on the types of clothes, uniforms and tools that are appropriate is sometime supplied as are reimbursements or loans for buying the initial items. The client-centered focus of many welfare-to-work programs appears to be a critical factor in their success.

Elements of Transition Programs

From these examples it is possible to infer several essential elements that are common to successful transition strategies:

- Participants have an understanding of what the new situation will be like, and the knowledge necessary to make choices regarding the new situation.
- Programs have successfully arranged for a smooth transition between the old and new situations.
- Participants often have actual experience in the new situation.
- Services that will assist the transition are provided.
- Students are supported and encouraged to continue their participation in the new situation.

In addition to common elements in transition programs, there are a number of challenges that frequently must be addressed and overcome by transition program administrators. Individual participants who are in a program should work closely with the teacher or instructor to make decisions about the transition based on their own personal experience, goals and expectations. For example, a ninth grade adult learner in a basic literacy/career choice program may not be ready to make lifetime choices alone. Welfare-to-work program participants sometimes are faced with an array of educational, vocational training, job placement and other services from which they must choose without proper assistance. Overcoming this challenge requires that adminstrators in the "sending" program have knowledge of and access to "receiving" programs so that they may fully inform the student about his/her options.

Another challenge for successful transition programs is to enable individuals to understand the array of options available to them. Thus, school-to-work and welfare-to-work programs seek to provide work experience; high school to college programs seek to provide a sample of the college experience (perhaps through a summer program, or a program using college students as mentors); and a volunteer tutorial or an adult literacy program seeks to provide information on other adult education programs.

Providing adequate and accurate information about the transition can be challenging for several reasons. For example, the adult learner may have a negative image of the classroom from a previous experience. The adult student may think an adult education class will be like the unpleasant experience he/she may have had in a regular high school classroom. Experiencing such a feeling might prevent the adult learner from enrolling in an adult basic education class. Therefore, it is important to impart a genuine understanding of the new situation. In the areas of school-to-work and welfare-to-work, this may be arranged through part-time work experience for students or welfare clients. For adult learners, this means a genuine understanding that the adult education class may be similar to their positive experience with a volunteer tutorial program.

Adult Education and Literacy Transitions

In the field of adult education and literacy, there are cross-referrals between volunteer and adult basic education programs, and transitions between GED preparation and community college or Postsecondary vocational programs, however, the major transition for adult learners is between being tutored in a volunteer literacy program and enrolling in an adult education class. The use of volunteers in federally-funded, state-administered adult education programs is extensive, however, there are several differences between volunteer based literacy and adult education programs. Many volunteer literacy programs are affiliated with Literacy Volunteers of America, Laubach Literacy Action or with other community-based organizations. They are frequently located in libraries. Volunteer programs predominantly use one-on-one instruction, or occasionally have tutors working with small groups as compared with larger groups in adult basic education classroom settings. A primary focus of the volunteer programs is to develop supportive, one-on-one relationships between the tutor and the student.

Because of the differences, the transition between programs may be discomforting to students for a number of reasons. There is a big difference between the adult learner admitting that he/she has limited literacy skills to an individual tutor and admitting this before other students in an adult education class. There is a certain amount of privacy that must be given up during the transition.

Another difficult change is in the mode of learning. As an adult learner moves along the educational continuum, he/she is in the process of transitioning from a dependent to an independent learner. A dependent learner may be unfamiliar with the planning, organizing, and directing required by the learning process. The independent learner, with periodic assistance and involvement from a teacher or tutor, may be able to progress with less intense support. This transformation from dependence to independence is an important element of a successful transition strategy.

Additionally, there is a false perception that students in adult education programs, in general, have significantly different goals from students in volunteer literacy programs. The reality, however, is that adult learners participating in volunteer literacy programs may have similar goals to those attending adult education classes. For example, both groups may be studying literacy to learn the basics of English as a foreign language, to be able to read to their children or to help their children with their homework.

In addition, many adult learners come to adult literacy programs after experiencing difficulty in the public schools. The privacy and support found in the adult learner-tutor relationship of a volunteer program can provide the beginning of a new or renewed interest in learning. For these adult learners this relationship may foster a love of reading long since forgotten. Other adult learners participate in literacy programs after emigrating from countries where they never had the opportunity to learn English. They may have struggled with English, and have come to the program determined to conquer the language. These adult learners generally come to literacy programs with diverse goals. Their goals are personal, and the one-on-one relationship with their tutor allows them to design a program to meet their needs. The privacy and individual attention afforded by the volunteer system are paramount. After six months or a year, many of these adult learners develop a close relationship with their tutors. Their perception of the adult education system may foster a reluctance to change what they have found to be successful i.e. the one-on-one tutoring that allows personal attention and immediate feedback. They may view the classroom situation as threatening, maybe reminiscent of prior school experience that was not positive.

Finally, maintaining a reliable source of funding has sometimes been difficult for many volunteer programs. In a report for the U.S. Department of Education, Westat, Inc. noted that while several of the literacy volunteer programs they visited had succeeded in obtaining state or local government funds, and all of the sites had developed a significant amount of support through the United Way, all but one of the sites they visited spent a great deal of time on fundraising. The one site that did not spend much time fundraising received more governmental support than the others, and was more directly involved than the others with ABE. Some of the federal and state funds had been targeted to support adults referred for service by other agencies

(e.g., JTPA), while other funds supported general activities.

Critical Issues in Building Partnerships

In addition to the challenges identified above, there are several potential issues that must be addressed as part of an effort to build partnerships that develop partnerships among all literacy and adult education providers.

First, there is tendency to view a partnership as an end in itself -- a way of satisfying some externally imposed mandate. While cooperative agreements, formal or informal, may serve short-term interests, long-term collaboration must be based on goals or ends rather than means. A partnership is a means to some goal not an end in itself. Building an effective transition program that keeps the adult learner as its focus at all times should be a goal of partnerships.

Second, there is a view that real philosophical differences between literacy programs can and should be ignored in order to overcome the "fragmentation" of the literacy field and to promote transitional strategies. What appears, however, to outsiders as "turf protection" may in fact reflect important differences in how to serve adult learners. Attempts to ignore such differences may take the shape of such transitional activities as common referral systems, recruiting, or consciousness-raising campaigns -- activities that are least likely to emphasize distinctions among programs that may be vital to the adult learner.

Third, the scarcity of politically supported offices to promote a transition or coordination strategy, such as a state office of literacy may prevent linkages.

Responsibility for translating mandates into action steps is typically diffuse in literacy efforts. The ability to provide incentives for collaboration and to ensure oversight in developing transitional strategies between public and private literacy and literacy-related programs is best carried out by offices with political clout.

What these potential challenges show is that we must move toward the establishment of a continuum of services with access for adults that responds to the diverse needs of the adult learners yet at the same time incorporates the various interests in the literacy community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Transitions between volunteer literacy and adult education programs can be developed by encouraging tutors, instructors, and teachers to work together cooperatively and to broach the subject with their students. Promoting the idea of a student-mentor relationship can be a critical first step in creating a shared responsibility for an adult learner's success. The mentor is anyone -- teacher, instructor, tutor -- who has a stake in the learner's educational success. The mentor can also help to ensure that the student is aware of all the potential programs and services available. Implicit in this role is that the mentor is fully aware of the student's goals, expectations, fears and concerns. Adult literacy providers can best use their energies by focusing on broad issues of working together to make it easier for students to progress toward their own learning goals.

While the roles of individual programs, and to a certain extent, the volunteer and adult education "systems" may differ, the responsibility for developing a smooth

continuum that is accessible to all learners is a shared one. Adult literacy when viewed as a continuum includes all the partners who support a learner's progress.

Within the continuum the common denominator is a supportive environment. There are, however, several key elements that may be critical to success. The first is that learners have control of their own learning process. They should move to different levels in their learning when they are ready, not when one of the partners mandates it. The second is that learners sense a collaborative spirit among the partners. When they recognize the progress they are making (and can continue to make) they are made aware of and directed to additional services or programs to continue their learning. Learners may then choose what works best for their needs. A third element is that a literacy/community consortium exists. The consortium may include literacy providers, businesses, social agencies and local or state entities. All partners are equal and all participate fully in the process. Finally, the continuum would link together family life and literacy, and would provide access to other supportive services such as transportation and child care.

Literacy is no longer viewed as merely the ability to read and write. Neither is it seen as something that an individual either has or does not have. Today, literacy encompasses a broad range of knowledge, skills, and abilities. As the definition of literacy has changed, so too have programs that deliver literacy services. These changes have challenged programs to be innovative, flexible, responsive and effective. The responsibility of adult educators and literacy providers is to continue to meet this challenge.

The following are summaries of the background papers that were written for and delivered during the national conference in Washington. Paper authors are indicated at the beginning of each summary. For complete copies of the papers, please contact the National Alliance of Business or the individual authors.

TECHNOLOGY AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY FOR PROGRAM TRANSITIONS

Eunice Askov and Barbara VanHorn
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The Pennsylvania State University

CAPSULE SUMMARY

The use of instructional and communications technology can help adult learners make the transition from volunteer literacy programs to adult basic education. To be effective, literacy instruction that is based on the use of technology must be relevant and meaningful to adult students regardless of the type of service provision. Using technology to develop and facilitate communication among adult educators helps to cultivate effective literacy transition strategies.

Effective Literacy Instruction. Good literacy instruction is learner-centered and is provided in a "functional context" i.e. an approach that is meaningful to the learners' work or lives rather than a predetermined, generic curriculum. It has been suggested that adults are best off in a program where literacy is not a goal, but a tool for reaching other goals. Functional, context instruction has more intrinsic value to the learner than learning basic skills without a relevant context. Additionally, adults are able to read more difficult materials when the materials are put in the context of their work, families, culture, neighborhood, or other aspect of their lives.

Benefits of Technology. The research literature reports the following benefits of using technology to assist with instruction:

- *Privacy.* Only the adult and his/her tutor or teacher need know the level of difficulty of the material, once the adult has learned to operate the computer.
- *Individualization.* The instruction can be customized to the student.
- *Achievement gains.* Some studies have showed better than average gains through the use of computer-aided instruction.
- *Cost Effectiveness.* Computer based instruction is sometimes less expensive than traditional instruction.
- *Control of Learning.* Controlling technology leads to a sense of empowerment for low-literate individuals who often feel that they have little control over their own lives.
- *Modern way to learn.* Technology is revolutionizing the workplace.

Barriers to Using Technology as an Instructional Strategy. However, there are often barriers to using technology.

- Continual upgrading is necessary to maintain "state of the art" equipment.
- Cost is a major barrier, particularly for volunteer programs that are more likely to lack government funds.

- Pressure to make rapid decisions in buying technology.
- Lack of expertise for setting up and maintaining equipment, and for training tutors and teachers.
- Lack of training and an emphasis on equipment not staff.
- Inappropriate instruction (i.e., software designed for children).
- Curriculum integration, technology as an add on not an integral part of the curriculum.
- Role changes. Tutors and teachers may feel displaced by technology as students become more independent.

Interestingly, most of the benefits are related to the adult learners, while most of the barriers are program related.

Technology can be empowering for adult learners since it allows them to take control of their own learning. Empowered learners are in a stronger position to face transitions. In addition, the technology may be the one familiar feature as they move from one program to the next.

The role of the instructor while using technology is more one of a facilitator than of a direct deliverer of instruction. Instructors can provide the linkages from the technology to application in learners' lives and can also help learners develop their metacognitive (learning how to learn) skills while using technology.

In order to empower adult learners and facilitate transitions, technology must be effective. Some of the characteristics of effective technology include: interactivity; learner control; consistency; graphics; and customization.

Computers can also assist in assessment and recordkeeping. Computer recordkeeping is ideal for students in transition since there is no need for them to undergo placement testing again. It is also useful because students can be taught in small groups, while assessments are done individually. Computerized portfolios eliminate the need for bulky hard copy portfolios. Having a portfolio on a data disk can ease the transition from one program to another. The computer also facilitates criterion referenced assessment -- assessing learners in terms of mastery of skills rather than comparing the learner to others through a grade level score.

Types of Learning Environments. The type of environment in which technology is used in can affect the ease of transition from volunteer tutoring to an adult basic education program.

One type of setting is the technology learning lab. Beginning readers are tutored in the lab setting and as they progress they learn to operate the instructional programs they are using. The transition to adult basic education is smoother for learners who move from a tutoring relationship supplemented by technology to instruction that is primarily delivered by technology and is monitored by a paid instructor.

Another model is of small groups of students using a single computer. The advantage here is that weaker students can be helped by more advanced students. Peer tutoring using computer software is an ideal supplement to group instruction for students making the transition to adult basic education.

Technology can be especially helpful for students with learning difficulties since the computer is infinitely patient.

Large integrated learning systems which offer opportunities to learners at all lev-

els, can ease the transition between volunteer and adult basic education.

A Final Note. In summary, technology can contribute to successful program transitions by:

- building learners' self-esteem and empowerment so that students take control of their own learning;
- forming a bridge from one program type to another;
- providing record-keeping to shorten the reassessment process;
- encouraging communication between the volunteer tutor and adult basic education teacher; and
- offering opportunities for peer tutoring and small group work using technology.

SETTING UP TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMS THROUGH EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION: A PRACTITIONER'S POINT OF VIEW

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CAPSULE SUMMARY

Transition strategies for adult students between volunteer literacy and adult education programs often include effective collaboration. Collaborative models exist in vocational, Trio (or bridge), adult education and community programs. It is important to establish a framework for effective transitions. Four programs that have succeeded in creating effective transition strategies through collaboration are: the Baytown, Texas LVA program; LVA of New York; the Center for Literacy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Arlington (Virginia) Education and Employment Program.

Today many adult students get lost in a "black hole" of literacy program transitions. There are four scenarios that are typical of this phenomena: 1) the learner asks to repeat a program or level over and over; 2) the learner travels from literacy program to literacy program without making much forward progress; 3) the learner completes a program successfully but goes back home instead of continuing to another program; and 4) the learner moves to a new program but drops out because neither the sending or receiving

program give the learner the transitional skills they need.

This situation exists because literacy organizations are not in a good position to develop transitional programs. Volunteer literacy organizations focus on a learner's goals while they are participating, but generally make little more than a referral to another program. Likewise, Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs typically do not develop strong transitional links with more advanced educational programs which will provide for the learners' next educational steps. While community colleges provide remediation and English as a Second Language programs, these are not the center of their activities. In addition, because community colleges are focused on the outcomes of degrees, certificates, jobs, or successful transfer to other postsecondary institutions, they can be less effective in helping literacy students make transitions to college.

Transitional Models. Vocational education transitional models include school-to-work programs and secondary vocational to postsecondary vocational programs. In school-to-work programs, work experience while in school prepares students for the full time jobs to come. Articulation is a major part of all school-to-work programs and requires that educators at all levels communicate with one another as well as with business and industry.

Trio or bridge programs are designed to serve first generation college students who come from low income families and who are academically underprepared or handicapped. For example, Upward Bound programs bring students to a campus during the summer or on weekends to provide intensive academic and personal support.

In 1993, the U.S. Department of Education funded three demonstration projects for establishing models for transitional programs for limited English proficient (LEP) students. The preliminary findings indicate that successful projects have the following components:

- key contacts at both the sending and receiving ends who are committed to addressing the transitional needs of participants;
- a commitment to work on regulations that create barriers to transitions;
- instructional links that connect one program to the next;
- personalized assistance for the learner that begins with recruitment by the receiving institution;
- a support group that is available for learners;
- advocacy to change procedures that perpetuate barriers for success;
- continual evaluation of transitional activities; and
- a commitment of all partners to make the interests and needs of the learners a priority above territoriality issues of programs.

A Framework for Transitions. The first step in developing an effective framework for adult literacy programs is to identify the key players for collaboration. Organizations related to literacy range from education to housing to health and human services to libraries, and include many others. All agencies and community groups that have a role in literacy transitions should be solicited as partners in developing the framework. Identifying a program's primary receiving and sending partners according to the

needs and goals of the learners is essential.

Second, focus on the goals of the learners. Frequently, learners need assistance in determining their goals. Therefore, it is essential for goal setting to become a part of the curriculum.

Third, develop transitional components for both sending and receiving institutions. These institutions should seek out transitional services from other groups in the community, and should link the outcomes of one program to the entry requirements of another program.

Fourth, understand differences in programmatic regulations or philosophies. Usually in the context of protecting funding sources, issues of territoriality can influence the development of effective transition programs. For example, many adult basic education programs are funded on the number of students in their programs. But, keeping students in a program to maintain contact hours is not always in the best interest of the learner.

Fifth, learn as much as possible about other programs' regulations, requirements and structure and build on the programs' strengths to provide the transitional services. For example, because literacy volunteer programs are frequently understaffed and ABE programs are typically staffed by part timers, it might be appropriate for community college partners to provide transitional classes using their counseling staff. JTPA and JOBS, with their emphasis on case management may also be in a position to provide transitional services.

Sixth, be committed to developing substantive systems of transition. This involves establishing specific and compatible goals of transition for all partners.

Seventh, enable the instructional staff from each partnering organization to work together to ensure that the instructional components for transition are linked appropriately.

Eighth, include a staff training program to ensure that all involved know how the system works and what their roles are in implementing the system.

Finally, agree on what kind of system of ongoing evaluation and follow-up to implement.

Transitional Strategies. Although it is difficult to find one program that is comprehensively addressing the transitional need of learners, there are several that are doing a good job. Four of these programs are: the LVA program at the Sterling Municipal Library in Baytown, Texas; Literacy Volunteers of New York; the Center for Literacy in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Arlington (Virginia) Education and Employment Program. Factors which are critical to the success of these four programs are that they: increase learners' exposure to opportunities that go beyond their initial purposes for attending the program by utilizing the resources of the library to expand knowledge about other educational and vocational opportunities; identify a staff person that specifically works on referral and ensures that learners know how to complete entry requirements for the next program, and feel comfortable at the program; link instruction specifically to the next educational steps with intensive instruction in literacy, life skills and career exploration; and develop an evaluation plan that outlines the barriers to transition in order to assess the effectiveness of the program in helping learners overcome these barriers to advance through the system.

A Case Study for Developing a Transitional Process. The LEA program at El Paso Community College also provides a good case study. Here, the tutors, learning facilitators and administrative staff were concerned about retention in the LEA program as well as retention in college courses by LEA completers. Examination of the problem quickly revealed an assessment problem: learners never made it to the tutor or small group to which they had been assigned.

After several focus groups with staff and learners revealed that the assessment tool was too intimidating, a decision was made to create an intake process that resulted in a "welcoming" atmosphere while at the same time allowing vital assessment decisions to be made.

The first step of the process consists of an interview with a bilingual tutor to find out the needs of the learner. A short intake form is completed to determine if the learner can print, and, if so, in what language. However, the tutor completes the form if the learner is struggling with it. The tutor decides if the learner should be assigned to an LEA class or referred to another program.

Second, program enrollees attend a 12-hour, two-week exploration class, with an emphasis on goal setting and self-discovery. Phase three of the enrollment process consists of a meeting of the instructional staff to review the student's work and make a placement decision. Learners are placed either in one-on-one tutoring or in small group instruction in Spanish literacy, bilingual literacy or English literacy.

After four years, the exploration class has reduced attrition by 20 percent, but the staff are continually making adjustments when new learners reveal there are gaps in the program. Other questions are still to be answered -- such as whether or not learners are progressing from Spanish literacy through English literacy at the right pace. There have also been difficulties to work out in moving learners into the college for the credit ESL program. In order to resolve these difficulties, a multi-organization project, Success through Transitional English Program (STEP), funded by the U.S. Department of Education, has been implemented. It includes 100 hours of information and exposure to the college program and enrollment in El Paso Community College.

In conclusion, developing transitional systems for learners is not simple, but through effective collaboration with the many players involved in providing literacy, transitional efforts can be improved.

LEARNER PORTFOLIOS TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS IN ADULT EDUCATION

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CAPSULE SUMMARY

Portfolios, as collections of student work, can go a long way to smoothing transitions of adult learners. The student carries the portfolio to the new situation and uses it to help her communicate the kinds of learning activities she has been engaged in and the knowledge and skills she has developed, as well as her interests, strengths and needs. Portfolios can benefit students, teachers and tutors, collaborative staff groups and program administrators. Portfolios create bridges across transitions and in doing so empower adults to take ownership of their own educational process.

Two examples provide a scenario of how a transition using a learner portfolio is used. These illustrations involve a tutorial student working on her portfolio with her tutor and a classroom student discussing his portfolio with his instructor. In the first case, the tutorial student and her tutor select material for the portfolio that: 1) encourages the student's and tutor's reflections on the learning process; 2) showcases the student's best efforts; and 3) suggests further instructional activities.

The second situation includes a classroom student who has just been accepted in the adult education program and is guiding his new instructor through the portfolio he put together in the tutorial program. Because the classroom and tutorial program staff laid out shared purposes and format for portfolios, the instructor knows that this portfolio conference will: 1) document the learner's tutorial learning activities (teaching approaches and materials, subjects and student interests); 2) review his progress; and 3) provide information for setting education and career goals. These examples indicate that putting the learner at the center is the key to effective transitions.

Learner Centered Instruction and Assessment. Taking charge of one's own learning, which is encouraged by portfolio practices, is in line with a model of education as a social transaction in which the student actively makes meaning by interacting with the environment. In addition, learners learn from subjects that are significant to them. Learner centered assessment focuses on real-world uses of literacy rather than decontextualized tests of isolated skills.

Portfolios to Support Transitions in Adult Education. Learner-centered instruction and assessment have great power for reducing discontinuities that students experience as a result of transitions between and within programs. For students, portfolios put them in the driver's seat of their own transitions. Using professional guidance to create and present their own portfolios prepares students to leave one setting and increases their control when adjusting to a new one. Portfolios also encourage students to reflect on the applications of learning and skills -- of new ways of applying knowledge at work, in school and at

home. Portfolios celebrate a student's work, providing welcome short-term rewards on the long haul toward a GED. Portfolios also help students share their work as a highly professional endeavor and raise everyone's expectations for student success.

For tutors and teachers, the close collaboration with students on portfolios raises questions such as "What literacy skills and subjects will particular learners require in other spheres of their lives?" "Which instructional media and teaching methods are best suited to teach these skills?" Portfolios also increase the power of assessment and strengthen student/teacher relationships. Portfolios highlight the strengths of tutorial instruction. They can enhance tutors' and teachers' professional growth by suggesting innovative ways of designing curriculum. Also, some instructors have started to keep portfolios of their own.

Portfolios are beneficial for collaborative staff groups. Tutors and teachers can clearly see what learning is, and how it can be advanced. Portfolios can also provide a focus for teamwork and staff training. Decision-making regarding portfolios can renew interest and spur training in areas of specialization such as group process skills, integrated curriculum, and computer instruction. As a worthy yet manageable reform, a system for using portfolios can also stimulate other more complex educational reforms.

Portfolios are also beneficial to program administrators because they provide a clear focus for linking programs and improving communication between players. Portfolios are also a cost effective way of making improvements -- requiring only time for staff training and for collaboration.

Implementation Issues and Approaches. Portfolios are both a process of learner-centered assessment and the product which contains the evidence of the learner's progress toward the agreed-upon goals. It is important that teachers and tutors receive training that supports them in learning to incorporate the portfolio process into their teaching.

From the primary grades through adult education, there are common assumptions about the purposes of portfolios. Portfolios are designed to:

- serve as a learning tool and as a record-keeping device;
- foster collaboration between learners and their tutors or teachers;
- develop learner ownership, containing students' reflections about themselves as learners;
- encourage self-assessment by the learner;
- demonstrate learners' progress toward desired outcomes;
- reveal learning strategies and abilities as well as products of learning; and
- reflect the learning contexts used in the instructional program.

Portfolios may also serve as showcases, documentation, evaluation, a process toward a larger body of work or a composite of the above.

Appropriate products to be put in portfolios include work products or samples, records of learning processes and strategies (by both students and teachers), and self-reflection samples. Decisions must also be made about such questions as who should have access to the portfolio and how often it should be updated.

The adult learner should be the owner of the portfolio, although tutors and teach-

ers may have access to it. The advantage of learner ownership becomes evident as students move from one type of program to another.

Teachers and tutors can experiment with using the portfolio with their adult learners. By studying the impact of portfolio assessment on their teaching and students' learning, they can actually learn how to use the process to its best advantage in their instructional setting.

Portfolios create a bridge across transitions. From the perspective of a program or consortium of programs implementing transitions strategies, portfolios represent opportunities to extend learning and apply it to learners' needs in many areas of their lives including family, workplace, and community.

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS AND ARTICULATED PROGRAMS

Judith Alamprese
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CAPSULE SUMMARY

The expansion of the nation's adult education system during the past decade has underscored the need for coordination between volunteer literacy and publicly-funded adult education programs. This expansion has highlighted the role of volunteers who, today, are not only providing instructional services through their own organizations, but also are being utilized in publicly-funded adult education programs. With this expansion, volunteer literacy programs have come to the awareness that services must be provided to foster learners' ongoing participation in adult education, particularly in higher levels of instruction.

The issue of learner transition in adult education programs has become increasingly important as state adult education offices undertake program improvement efforts to determine effective ways for local adult programs to serve the diverse group of adults who are requesting literacy and basic skills services.

Historically, a number of barriers has inhibited the development of transition programs in adult education. Within the publicly-funded adult education system, there have been few incentives for local programs to enter into collaborative relationships with volunteer programs. Since many adult education programs

have waiting lists, there is little organizational incentive to recruit additional clients from volunteer settings. On the volunteer side, transition activities are frequently initiated by individuals rather than being the policy of the organization.

When transition activities are more formalized it may be because the state adult education office funds training that involves staff from both volunteer literacy and state-funded adult education programs.

At the organizational level there are two kinds of coordination strategies. One kind develops relationships while the other develops communication strategies which sustain the relationships.

Sustaining relationships frequently depends on the perceived benefits and costs by the organizations involved. Three factors are important: the extent to which the parties involved view the relationship as reciprocal; the extent to which the benefits of engaging in a relationship are perceived to be at least equal to or more than the costs; and the extent to which the benefits are perceived to be proportional to the investment that is made in establishing a relationship.

If the benefits outweigh the costs, agreements are usually developed between the organizations. Informal agreements might relate to sharing information about community resources, whereas formal agreements would be required for the exchange of staff or monetary resources. In addition to agreements, communication mechanisms which lead to consensus building are required for joint activities. Some of these communication mechanisms result from the interpersonal networks that have developed through interagency coordination activities with job training and social service agencies as states work to provide a system of integrated services to clients.

Besides effective communication, leadership is an essential ingredient for successful interorganizational relationships. Leadership could come from the state or local level, and from volunteer literacy and adult education programs. At the local level, leadership often is exhibited when a representative from either the volunteer or the public education sector initiates an activity that can help students in their transition from one program to another.

A number of the organizational activities that are being carried out in volunteer literacy and adult education programs exemplify effective strategies for transitioning adult learners across programs. Three of these strategies are: staff training; learner assessment; and bridge programs. Staff training is being provided by some state adult education offices for both volunteer and public literacy staff. For example, in Connecticut, the state Bureau of Adult Education funds Literacy Volunteers of America (LVA) affiliates on the condition that they meet federal reporting requirements and collect specified participant data. To facilitate meeting these requirements, the state offers LVA program staff training provided by the state-funded Adult Training and Development Network.

The collection of learner assessment data is a key transition strategy that volunteer literacy programs increasingly are undertaking. The Oregon Office of Community College Services is conducting a pilot project with Oregon Literacy, Inc., a state Laubach Literacy Action (LLA) council to determine the types of learner assessment data that can be collected in state-funded volunteer programs. Volunteer program staff may be trained

in the state's basic skills assessment procedures. In addition, a number of volunteer programs participate in the pilot project to assess various assessment methods. Volunteer literacy program coordinators have been trained to use these methods and are working with tutors from their local programs to implement the assessment procedures. These activities provide a common framework for assessing adult learners, and in this way aid the transition process.

Bridge programs facilitate the transition process by providing overlapping activities between two programs. For example, in Washington Literacy's ESL program, tutors frequently continue tutoring an individual after he/she has enrolled in classes at a community or technical college. Through this process; the tutor provides encouragement and assists the learner in working independently. At another bridge program in Cleveland, Tennessee, the LLA council provides tutoring services and small group classes to ABE students during the summer months when ABE classes are not in session.

Another type of emerging transition strategy involves coordinating staff functions of volunteer organizations and adult education programs. For example, tutors from the Volunteer Learning Program in Fairfax, Virginia, provide instruction to adult education learners who are participating in the External Diploma Program which has no instructional component.

An aspect of staff sharing is the diversity of roles that both volunteer and adult education staff can play in fostering transitions programs. For example, one staff member could serve both organizations by becoming an expert on educational and other community support services that are available to the adult learner. Or, a staff member could be designated as the expert on developing formal agreements for an organization.

State support of transition efforts is essential. State adult education offices are working with state level volunteer organizations on activities such as learner assessment and data sharing projects. In addition, by funding volunteer programs, state adult education can increase the quality and extent of the instructional services offered by volunteer literacy programs. State volunteer organizations also can encourage coordination between their local offices and state-funded adult education programs by providing training and technical assistance in the variety of transition strategies that are being carried out by volunteer literacy and adult education programs across the country.

PRE-CONFERENCE SESSION ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADULT LITERACY SURVEY

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderators:

Steven Golightly:
National Alliance of Business
Peggy Siegel:
National Alliance of Business

Participants:

Glenn Corsini: Grand Hyatt Hotel
Teresa Sweeney:
Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., National Capital Area
Charles Talbert:
Maryland State Department of Education

This session provided an overview of the National Adult Literacy Survey (NALS) from the perspectives of literacy volunteers, Adult Education, and business and industry. The session also presented and described NAB's role in the NALS technical assistance and dissemination contract.

The term "literacy" has been subject to inflation. It has evolved from signing one's name in the 1880's to the definition used in the NALS, which is:

> *Using printed and written information to function in society, to achieve one's goals and to develop one's knowledge and potential.*

The NALS tasks simulate tasks we use in our daily lives.

Funded by the Department of Education, designed by ETS and administered by Westat, the NALS included not only a national survey of participants aged 16 and up and 1,100 prison inmantes, but an allowance for the states to conduct their own surveys. Twelve states chose to participate in this option.

The NALS has three scales - prose, document and quantitative - which are scored from 0 to 500, with an average of 270. The scores have been broken out into five levels. A prose Level 1 question might require the respondent to read a short text, identifying information in the text that is identical to the information in the question. By comparison, a Level 5 prose question would include dense text, with plausible detractors, and may require background knowledge and inferences.

An example of the types of people classified as Level 1 are 25% of immigrants, 62% of dropouts and 33% of those 65 and older. Level 1 also includes a large number of persons with visual or mental handicaps. Interestingly, 65% of those in Level 1 describe themselves as using English well or very well.

The survey results also revealed that a low level of education correlated with a low score on the NALS. Also, all minorities except the "Hispanic/Other" scored lower on average than whites.

The National Alliance of Business has a key role in the technical assistance and dissemination of NALS results. NAB's outreach efforts included facilitating five focus groups, attending meetings on the survey, and conducting a literature review. NAB will develop briefing materials, which will be used for training Department of Education staff who will be working in the field. In addition, there will be presentations at conferences, and in public forums. Another component of NAB's role is to conduct

data analysis and provide assistance to others, in partnership with the Educational Testing Service, which designed the survey.

There are three areas where NALS has special implications. They are economic competitiveness; the current and future workforce; and special populations. NALS also provides an opportunity to rethink approaches in adult education.

The panel presentations started with Teresa Sweeney, who noted that volunteer organizations were not surprised by the survey findings. She said that NALS proves the need for volunteer programs, and commended the emphasis on skills attainment rather than grade levels in the NALS. Sweeney believes that the survey affirms the need for state funding for lower level literates. She reminded the audience that one cannot skip levels 1 and 2 to get to 5.

Charles Talbert bemoaned the fact that the costs for the special state surveys were prohibitive for almost 80 percent of the states. He believed, however, the competency-based approach to be sound. He went on to note positively that the NALS findings brought together local literacy boards in the states and recommended a Cabinet level Czar for literacy.

Glenn Corsini, who represents the hotel industry, noted that others are now beginning to realize what the service industries have already been aware of. He mentioned the recruitment problem in the hotel industry and said that business and industry need to work among themselves as well as establishing partnerships with education to solve literacy problems.

In response to a question from the audience as to how to persuade individuals who scored in Level 1 or Level 2 to get help, the panel had a number of suggestions. First, state associations can use former students as role models. Second, businesses can establish training programs, although in poor economic times training is generally the first to go. Third, welfare programs that serve those out of the labor force must rely on the volunteer programs that serve the unemployed.

The involvement of business/labor and churches is paramount. Talbert also emphasized that literacy providers should stop fighting each other -- learners are diversified and want different kinds of options -- education should go to business rather than the other way around and, adult education should build bridges with K-12 programs.

Corsini responded that education should not have to come to business, but should be able to meet them. However, many companies are unaware of a literacy problem.

Sweeney noted that limited resources have forced turf battles between adult education and the volunteer programs, but pointed out that there are volunteers in Adult Basic Education as well.

The three panelists agreed that there should be more partnering and more programs. Through establishing partnerships, they were hopeful to raise more funds.

Talbert noted that income increases over the five NALS levels are marginal. It appears that one must move well beyond a GED to see a significant change in one's standard of living. This may discourage some individuals with low literacy levels. In addition, as noted above, the need is not perceived -- 50-75 percent of those at the lower levels believe they read well or very well.

Corsini would like business people to refer those they do not hire to literacy programs. However, the Americans with Disabilities Act is interpreted to mean that business cannot "not hire" someone because of their inability to read or write. He added that many jobs may require OSHA or EPA training, but they don't require reading and writing. All he can do is encourage employees to attend literacy classes.

The comments from the audience included:

- Programs should be marketed as "Learn new skills", rather than "learn to read and write".
- There is a level of frustration in what we are doing. September (the release of the NALS report) to May (the Transitions Conference) is a long time.
- Staff Development -- both volunteer and adult programs have mutual needs. They should develop strategies for collaboration. For networking assistance the State Literacy Resource Center is available.
- Is there a legal right to educational funding?
- The real issue is not funds, but serving students. If programs are quality, people will donate funds.
- In considering the transition, we should have a spirit of not blaming people, but instead should be thinking globally.

OPENING PLENARY

The conference officially began Monday morning, May 16, with a plenary session in the West Ballroom of the Renaissance Hotel in Washington, DC. Speakers at the Opening Session included: Steven Golightly from the National Alliance of Business; Julia Shepherd from the Office of Vocational and Adult Education at the U.S. Department of Education; Jinx Crouch from Literacy Volunteers of America; and Peter Waite from Laubach Literacy Action.

Steve Golightly set the stage for the two days that would follow by describing the different types of sessions on the agenda. He called on each of the participants to make this conference successful by actively engaging in dialogue and discussion. Jinx Crouch stressed the historic opportunity presented by this conference. Bringing together over 200 State Directors of Adult Education and volunteer literacy program practitioners was an unprecedented event. Julia Shepherd emphasized the importance of reaching out to all the key stakeholders in the effort to improve literacy instruction especially community-based organizations. Peter Waite spoke of the difficulty he had at first in envisioning the conference. It was when he began to think of this event as a meeting and not a conference that its true significance came through. The Transitions Conference represented an occasion to begin to develop a common vision for the future of adult education and literacy policy.

FINDING COMMON GROUND

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:

Steven Golightly:
National Alliance of Business

Participants:

Teresa Sweeney:
Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc., National Capital Area

Garland Hankins:
Arkansas Department of Education

Barbara Hanley:
Laubach Literacy Action

The session began with a discussion of the commonalities between Adult Basic Education (ABE) and voluntary literacy education, and how they have worked together on common goals. Cooperative activities include sharing facilities, conducting joint recruitment, staff development, and sharing staff (one administrator working half time as an ABE administrator and half time as a voluntary program administrator).

Other areas of cooperation discussed were funding, instruction -- where an ABE instructor uses a volunteer to fill in the gaps -- shared assessment tools and co-located assessment sites, joint conferences at the state level and the National Student Adult Literacy Congress.

Barbara Hanley noted that "what is past is prologue" and challenged the conference attendees to measure their success one customer at a time.

Teresa Sweeney described the comprehensive services offered by LVA-DC, and said that literacy services complement and add resources to other programs. She said that LVA-DC has partnerships with welfare and homeless, as well as ABE programs. They are happy to work with any agency to help ensure that all the students have basic and life skills.

Garland Hankins reported that in Arkansas LVA taught them how to do assessment. The Governor's Commission on Adult Literacy served to: 1) elevate the position of adult literacy, 2) establish the Arkansas Literacy Council, and 3) mandate one RFP process for all private and public programs. Representatives of these programs also attend conferences together.

The panel was asked what the major obstacle (other than funding) was to cooperation. Obstacles listed included attitude problems, and that adult literacy is growing and trying to get its own identity. The major obstacle reported was the fragmentation of services. Panelists noted that providers should remember that their customers are the students, and should set up one-stop shopping programs.

The panel presentation was followed by a lively discussion with conference attendees. The discussion included the following points:

- Turf battles are a major dilemma in some states.
- In Texas, the local consortia must make a single application and cooperate on staff development. There is a system of local literacy councils. It was noted that two way communication is needed, everybody should be at the table.

- The title of the conference, Transitions: Building Partnerships Between Literacy Volunteer and Adult Education Programs was misleading because voluntary programs are already an integral part of adult education.
- Attendees from some states asked for assistance from those states that have put pressure on their state directors for joint councils and one funding process. The need to build coalitions was emphasized.
- There was a discussion of quality indicators. In some states, the community-based- organizations have had difficulties meeting the quality indicators. Other states have included volunteers on the entity which developed the quality indicators. One state reported two sets of standards, one for Adult Basic Education and another for volunteer groups.
- There was some discussion of accountability, and whether the federal government could use sanctions to ensure appropriate input into the development of quality indicators. It was suggested that this could be incorporated in the reauthorization of the Adult Education Act. However, it was noted that participants came to the conference to work together and should not wait for reauthorization -- and there should not be a focus on sanctions.
- Participants from Maine are enthusiastic about the quality indicators, have started portfolio assessment and are using literacy volunteers in ABE classes.
- It was noted that there has been some cooperation but there are still lots of challenges and that the bulk of the change must be at the community level. In terms of change, volunteers expect ABE to come to them, but that LVA volunteers should make themselves more visible and participatory.
- Partnerships must be built systematically, looking comprehensively at all services in the community by involving volunteers and Adult Education staff in planning. However, there is a lack of resources and funding is a problem.

As the last point illustrates, funding can be a problem, but over the course of the conference, the participants encouraged each other to collaborate regardless of the funding situation, and indeed, to collaborate to further extend or raise more funds.

WORKSHOPS

The Conference featured four workshops entitled: Technology; Collaboration: A Practitioner's Perspective; Learner Portfolios; and Community Relationships. The workshops were based on the papers summarized above in Chapter III. Each workshop was moderated by a LVA or LLA representative and featured a presentation by the author of the paper and remarks by two Resource Contacts. The following are descriptive summaries of each of the four workshops.

Workshop A - Technology

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:
Michael Buchholz,
Literacy Volunteers of America
Author:
Barbara VanHorn,
Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy
Resource Contacts:
Kit Bieschke-Baker,
Washington County Skill Center
Chip Carlin,
LVA New York State

Technology offers a promise. It is a tool that must be used wisely and must add to the instructional process. Technology should be learner-centered, meaningful, and related to student interest. The use of technology is not without potential problems including: lack of access or under utilized access; inadequate funding; and no resource support. Specifically, for transitions, technology can empower students and give them a feeling of control. It helps to establish familiarity between programs if the same technology is used. It can also aid in assessment and record keeping. Finally, technology can facilitate communication, peer tutoring and small group instruction.

Participants in the workshop raised several issues related to the use of technology as a transition strategy. First, technology, and in particular, software must be flexible. Customizable software offers real advantages. Just as all students are different, all will have different needs. To the extent that technology can be made flexible to meet these needs, it is likely to be more successful. The software must "fit" the student not visa versa. No off-the-shelf software program, however, will meet all student needs so this balance must be kept in mind. Second, as a student becomes more comfortable using technology, his/her personal interaction with the tutor or instructor may decrease. This can be a double-edge sword. On the one hand, the student is becoming less dependent on the tutor and therefore a more independent learner. On the other hand, if a student simply replaces a dependence on his/her instructor with one on a computer or software program, his/her progress may be inhibited. Again, there is a delicate balance between technology and personal interaction -technology should supplement not replace the tutor/instructor. Finally, there is an issue of funding and the gap between possibility and practice. Once this obstacle is overcome, however, technology holds great potential for students who are required to participate in programs, and in portfolio assessment for students with disabilities.

Workshop B - Collaboration: A Practitioner's Perspective

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:
Peg Price,
Literacy Volunteers of America
Author:
Carol Clymer-Spradling,
El Paso Community College
Resource Contacts:
Inaam Mansoor,
Arlington Public Schools
Vicki Meneses,
Portland Community College

Collaboration among and between programs offers several real benefits. First, it often allows common intake and assessment, either at one place or at multiple sites, with a uniform placement team and a common philosophy. Second it often leads to extensive outreach. In the area of placement, collaboration usually leads to a clear understanding of who serves which clients. Third, effective collaboration facilitates shared research materials, staff development and conferences. There may also be integration of such systems as computer data-bases, information requirements, and entry requirements. Finally, collaboration leads to systematic connections which in turn can result in easy access between agencies for colleagues and learners, a single point of contact or directory and combined schedules of training and counseling services.

There are, however, several challenges to effective collaboration. It is very hard to change attitudes. Many people think, "We're well established, why change or go outside." The challenge is to involve all players in the planning. Additionally, promoting collaboration often may be seen as simply adding paperwork. The reality is that in the long run, as systems are integrated and information is shared, effective collaboration reduces paper work. Finally, there is a challenge in convincing top administrators to enhance collaborative transition efforts and to continue services after demonstration funding has run out.

Workshop participants had several suggestions for ways to promote effective collaboration including: the establishment of a system of information exchange such as Online; the development of a transitions handbook for organizers, a training brochure, and a database/monograph on model programs; the creation of a process to determine and then discuss underlying values different organizations bring to the table; clarification of the policy on who serves youth; the design of a new job description for the tutor/teacher who integrates work on transitions; and the redesign of tutor training to set goals that include constant revisiting and resetting of learner short and long term objectives.

Workshop C - Learner Portfolios

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:
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Laubach Literacy Action

Author:
Stephen Reder,
Northwest Regional Education Lab

Resource Contacts:
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Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts
Charles Talbert,
Maryland State Department of Education

Learner Portfolios, as collections of student work that students select with their tutors or teachers according to program guidelines, can go a long way toward smoothing transitions from one learning setting to another. This workshop explored the promise of learner portfolios to enhance transitions. It also revealed how the process of creating a portfolio and presenting it to a tutor or teacher in a new setting can increase a student's ownership in his/her work.

Participants in this workshop raised several questions regarding the use of learner portfolios. These include:

- What items should be in a portfolio?
- Who physically keeps it?
- Can it be done using computers?
- Who is the customer for the portfolio?

One recurring question concerned the difficulty of demonstrating learner accomplishment to funders and learners themselves when using a non-standardized assessment. Participants were especially concerned about government funding sources that mandated reading level and test scores as reporting requirements.

Many participants were interested in how a potential employer would evaluate a portfolio to assess on applicant's skills. In addition, a few participants were interested in using portfolios to develop integrated educational services.

This workshop also included a discussion of school to work issues and the current emphasis on enhanced employability as the primary goal for literacy skills development.

Workshop D - Community Relationships

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:
Bill Raleigh,
Laubach Literacy Action
Author:
Judith Alamprese,
COSMOS Corporation
Resource Contacts:
Donald Block, Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council
Lennox McLendon, Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Education

The expansion of the nation's adult education system during the past decade has underscored the need for collaboration between volunteer literacy and publicly funded adult education programs. This workshop explored several issues related to this collaboration. First, a wide variety of programs is needed to serve the needs of a diverse student population. Because each student brings different experiences, skills, goals and objectives, the "one size fits all" model of program collaboration is unlikely to sustain consistently successful results. As a corollary to this issue, programs need to establish their niche or specialty. Just as it is beneficial to students to find a program that suits their needs, successful programs are often those that determine the services that can be provided and focus on the effective delivery of those services. There is an inherent danger that in trying to do too much, programs will sometimes do too little. Second, regular communication is the key to successful collaboration. This principal is so self-evident that it often is taken for granted, yet sometimes it is critically lacking in application. A directory of service providers, available to and used by all providers is one of the most effective tools for communication and collaboration. Third, state leadership and support (especially in the form of incentives rather than mandates) greatly facilitates local collaboration. Most successful collaborative efforts are driven from the bottom-up, but unless there is a sustained and committed interest from the top, success is often elusive. In other words, a grass-roots effort will be much more successful if there is rain from above. Finally, significantly more resources are needed to meet fully the needs of all learners and collaboration helps to facilitate more efficient use of the limited resources that are currently available.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr. Augusta Souza Kappner
Assistant Secretary for Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education

The following are the prepared remarks used by Assistant Secretary Kappner during the luncheon on Monday, May 16. Please note, Dr. Kappner departed from these remarks.

Good afternoon. You are here in Washington today to discuss transitions...transitions as a passage from one stage of literacy achievement and learning to the next.

Specifically, you are here to explore how certain strategies help adult learners progress smoothly along an educational path that leads to the realization of their educational and employment goals.

There is great cause for concern. There is a sense of urgency as we meet here today. Transition, the sense that we must all be engaged and progressing as learners, is now a national priority.

In your pre-conference on Sunday many of you had a chance to get an overview of the 1992 National Adult Literacy Survey. If you were not there, I can tell you the results were not encouraging. Around 21 percent of all adults demonstrated skills in the lowest level of proficiency...that's around 40 million American adults. About another 50 million adults operate at the next higher level.

This lack of basic educational skills of many of our citizens hampers our ability to compete in the global marketplace. This lack of basic educational skills handicaps individuals in a labor market that increasingly demands technological competence. The magnitude of this problem makes your challenges great indeed.

After I leave here this afternoon I am going to the White House for the Goals 2000 ceremony. Goals 2000 will provide resources to states and communities for developing and implementing a comprehensive education reform strategy to help all students meet challenging academic and occupational standards. Goals 2000 places a priority on the formation of partnerships between education providers and other community and business groups.

In addition, Goal 5 of the Act states:

> *"Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in a global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship."*

To help us realize Goal 5, President Clinton signed into law this month the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. Although Goal 5 refers specifically to the universal literacy of adults, progress towards meeting that goal depends to a large extent on the educational experiences before adulthood.

In response to the need to create comprehensive school-to-work systems in each state, community, education, and business leaders have entered into new collaborative part-

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nerships to prepare students for the high-skill, high-wage jobs of the 21st Century.

For us to realize Goal 5, many of our adults will need to return to school not just for basic literacy training but for further specialized education and training. Transitions become critical. Adult literacy programs should be the gateway that leads to a full range of educational opportunities and services.

There are many literacy programs that serve as gateways. Educational institutions are embracing literacy development in their missions. Community based organizations such as libraries, churches, and neighborhood centers continue to be involved in literacy as they respond to the needs of their neighborhoods. Business and industry are incorporating literacy instruction into their training programs as they prepare for radical changes in the workplace due to technological advancements.

It is difficult to keep track of all the players involved in adult education and literacy. In your first session on Monday you spent some time examining the common ground among them, especially between adult education and volunteer literacy programs.

Volunteers, in the field of adult education and literacy are significant and invaluable players in helping to advance adult learners. The individual attention and dedication of countless volunteers has helped thousands of adults discover or rediscover a world of learning and opportunity. Volunteers are used in a variety of ways, but especially for the labor intensive and important task of tutoring the educationally disadvantaged youth and adults–those at the lowest skills level.

Adult education programs focus on adult secondary education, adult basic education, and ESL...and more advanced skills, imparted more often than not in a classroom setting.

The Amendments to the Adult Education Act under the National Literacy Act of 1991, made it less difficult for volunteer literacy and other community-based organizations to access adult education funds through the "direct and equitable access" provision. To be awarded these funds, programs are required to demonstrate not only past effectiveness in providing services but the degree to which they will coordinate and utilize other literacy and social services in the community.

In your workshops today you will examine a variety of strategies for building partnerships between volunteer and adult education programs. Generally these strategies improve the linkages and relationships that facilitate transitions.

You will examine a very promising strategy, computer technology, that provides us with new tools for smoothing the transition of learners from voluntary tutoring to group instruction. New software is being developed to meet the needs of adults at the most basic level a well as empowering other adults to take advantage of their own learning to move far beyond basic skills.

In conclusion, it is important to remember that literacy is not a static entity. 100 years ago, you would be considered literate if you could write your name. The standard has

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risen steadily in recent years to reflect the changes in society, the global economy, advances in technology, and the higher education requirements to function effectively in our society. All adults will have to learn throughout their lifetime. Transitions will be crucial to the success of adult learners.

We believe that the work that you have begun here in these sessions will enable you to begin to develop strong partnerships for meaningful transitions.

I would hope you leave Washington with a greater understanding of adult education delivery structures. I would hope you would leave with a knowledge of the various ways strong partnerships for traditional services can be built. I would hope you leave Washington with renewed energy and enthusiasm to meet the challenges ahead.

And, I would hope you would leave behind in Washington a renewed commitment on our part to use all the resources, programs and systems available to help adult learners achieve their goals.

SETTING THE STRATEGIC AGENDA

MODERATORS & PARTICIPANTS

Moderator:
Lucy Duncan,
National Alliance of Business
Participants:
Marty Angelone,
Literacy Volunteers of America
Gerald Kilbert,
California Department of Education
Sondra Stein,
National Institute for Literacy

This session took place on Tuesday morning, the second day of the conference. *Setting the Strategic Agenda* offered conference participants a chance to hear the details of the strategic planning process from representatives of three different organizations: Literacy Volunteers of America; the National Institute for Literacy; and the California Department of Education.

According to Marty Angelone, LVA has been immersed in strategic planning for three years. They initiated strategic planning because they wanted to promote quantitative and qualitative organizational growth -- and to better meet student goals. They were also looking for better volunteer instruction, accountability and a focus.

LVA initiated strategic planning in 1992 with the assistance of a Hewlett Foundation grant. At that time, they introduced a 50-50 management system which is based on the concept of maintaining a 50%-50% balance between intake, support, slowed-down training, and increased support for tutors on the one hand, and increasing the cost of tutor training and hourly instruction on the other. (She noted that volunteers are not free!)

LVA built a participatory strategic planning design and learned a few lessons in the process. Lessons learned from their strategic planning experience included:

- The need to avoid negativity, respect people and focus on resolving issues.
- That it must be a collaborative process which respects all participants. Each participant should have an equal voice and see benefits of strategic planning and focus on strategic thinking.
- To focus on issues and decision-making. Take a "Holding the Opposites" approach, a Jungian phrase for finding common threads and solutions for polarized issues.
- That strategic planning is the beginning of a process that doesn't end. All participants need to listen to each other, and learn from their failures. Decide who is the decision-maker and who is the client.

Angelone noted that strategic planning requires time, human and fiscal resources, commitment, shared values, a positive attitude, and the need to avoid waiting until the "roof is falling in."

The challenge is to come up with a living document, provide a vision for success, and plenty of time to discuss it.

Sondra Stein then briefly described the five year state capacity building grants awarded by the National Institute of Literacy (NIFL) to 14 states, in the areas of performance measurement and staff development. The first year of each of the five year grants calls for strategic planning.

Since there is a tendency to avoid strategic planning because of a lack of resources, the NIFL thought it important enough to specifically provide the funds for it. Why is strategic planning important? Because of the enormity of the problem of adult learners -- there is a need to collaborate and not compete.

Strategic planning allows the states to focus on who they are serving and where they are going. It enables them to look at service networks together and focus on change, developing a clear, long term plan.

Stein noted that Goals 2000 provides a common framework for strategic planning. Most important, in addition to the focus on who is served, is a common framework for solving problems and sharing goals at the local level and with states. Once we get on with who to serve and where to send them, then we can think about the best ways to do this i.e. who to work with to help people get the skills and knowledge they need.

Gerald Kilbert noted that strategic planning is needed because everyone is busy with their own projects, which are unlinked, and frequently the outcomes of these unlinked projects are ignored. What did the projects do to reduce illiteracy -- to make real changes? Did the project contribute to an overall vision and goals.

According to Kilbert, data is critical to strategic planning and must be gathered. Adult educators need to know who the providers are serving, what are their needs and what are the outcomes. In California populations seeking literacy instruction have increased and are extremely diverse. To assist with strategic planning, sources of data include the National Adult Literacy Survey, the corresponding state surveys, and data from the National Institute for Literacy.

Strategic planning must include input from representatives of all *those served, and of those serving*, such as inmates,

library program participants, volunteer programs, ABE programs, as well as local supermarkets and banks. A broad based group is required for total community planning. All stakeholders must be at the table, and must have an equal role.

An important theme in adult education which is being considered by strategic planners in California is how to improve access. (Blacks are seven percent of the population, but only one percent of those served. Latinos are 24 percent of the population, but 60 percent of those served).

Kilbert emphasized that the problem should be stated, accountability systems improved and outcomes measured and reported. After all activities and steps have been documented, then one is ready to consider what should be done to improve coordination and planning.

Obstacles include the lack of time, people not really believing what the stakeholders say, and silent non-participatory stakeholders. A common culture and value system is critical. Respect for all participants in the strategic planning process is essential. People who respect each other can learn at any time, in any place and at any pace.

Kilbert remarked that all of us can learn from the Transitions conference -- there is a need for working together and a willingness to change. He concluded that Deming, who wrote about the Learning Organization, changed some of his principles, and when questioned about it, asked "May I too not learn?"

Finally, Lucy Duncan suggested a framework for strategic planning working from the top down. Starting with identifying the vision of what an ideal transition would look like from the student's perspective, and then considering what has to happen for this transition to become reality. This process sets broad goals, narrower objectives within each goal, and finally specific activities or strategies for meeting each objective.

Duncan emphasized that commitment for the strategic plan must be obtained before it can be implemented. Obstacles should be anticipated. Although the plan is developed top down, it is implemented from the bottom up.

At the conclusion of this session, conference attendees participated in a strategic planning exercise that involved putting together a jigsaw puzzle and beginning to think about a vision of adult literacy transitions.

STRATEGIC DESIGN SESSIONS

Following the strategic planning exercise, conference participants broke into smaller groups for a networking lunch and a series of interactive strategic design sessions facilitated by NAB trainers. These sessions are described below under Report Out.

REPORT OUT SESSION

The strategic planning session set the stage for five strategic planning groups split by region. Generally, the regional groups split into five or six subgroups, usually divided by states. These subgroups brainstormed the elements of a good transitions system, and then came together to list the common elements. Each regional group then selected a spokesperson to present the common elements to all conference participants.

It should be noted here that a number of participants throughout the conference emphasized that transitions are not limited to going from a voluntary program to a state funded adult education program.

Transitions go in both directions. Additionally, there are transitions from GED programs to community colleges or to vocational schools, as well.

This Section will describe the common themes that emerged from these sessions.

All five groups had some statement regarding ease of entry across programs such as a single or holistic assessment. One group used the image of an information super highway that crosses boundaries between agencies and services. A second group visualized a hassle-free, barrier-free transition process. Another group used words such as seamless, smooth, and painless to describe the transition process from the student's perspective. Equitable access, through quality and appropriate support services, such as one-stop shopping (co-location) and alternative learning approaches to meet individual needs and cultural differences were listed as common elements by most of the five groups.

Another set of common elements focused on respect for the learner. Conference attendees visualized a transition process that is learner-centered, with programs and instruction guided by the learners' goals, and student leadership on planning or policy sides.

Cooperation and collaboration was another common theme. One group noted that each agency can be true to its own mission, but still be collaborative. Another group thought there should be mutual respect for all participants, while a third believed that collaboration includes: systemic assessment; referral and staff development; transitions in all directions; and recognition of the legitimate place of volunteers. For a fourth group, collaboration included communication linkages and shared ownership. Open and honest communication was also thought to be important by many groups.

Accountability was mentioned frequently. One group believed that accountability should be agreed to by all providers, that regulations should be promulgated, and that there should be "waivers" for meeting the spirit of the law. Another group thought that adult students should move through this continuum with program accountability and that a successful transition strategy requires mutual accountability.

In terms of the actual transition, two groups mentioned assimilation to new programs or effective orientations. A third group mentioned guidance, open-entry, open-exit programs, and a holistic intra- and inter-agency approach. This group also thought that peer support was important to the transition.

Staff development was explicitly mentioned by two of the five groups, with a third citing value placed on lifelong learning, which could apply to staff as well as students.

One group's ideal transition system included unlimited resources, while funding (including in-kind support) through various sources -- the community, stakeholders, and state and federal governments -- was considered important by another group.

Instruction was mentioned by all five groups. Besides being student-centered, one group felt that instruction should be quality, flexible, cutting edge, and should use the latest technology. A second group thought that the number of hours of instruction should be increased. A third group mentioned qualified instruction that is goal driven and allows students to move at their own pace. One of these groups also stated that instruction

would be supported through case management, support groups (of learners, mentors, etc.) and by community/employer support. A fourth group stated that accelerated instruction, supported by good quality materials should be available. Finally, the fifth group thought the content of the instruction should be applicable. Knowledge of and/or use of community-wide services was suggested by two groups.

Conclusion. A special mention should be made of the team from Tennessee for their dedication and commitment to improving literacy instruction. During the Strategic Design Session, they developed the Mission Statement which was unanimously praised during the Report Outs. This Mission Statement captures the spirit if not the letter of the Conference on Transitions and is comprehensive in its scope yet clear in its direction. The mission statement can be found in the section entitled Conclusion.

WRAP-UP/CLOSING

Ron Pugsley of the Office of Vocational and Adult Education, made brief remarks at the conclusion of the conference during which he commented on the progress that had been made over the previous two-and-a-half days and urged participants to continue their efforts to improve literacy and adult education transitions. Steve Golightly thanked the participants and officially closed the conference.

Introduction

When developing a program or project that involves multiple organizations or agencies, considerable attention must be given to developing a plan that meets the identified needs, yet can be implemented within the capabilities of the participating entities. All too frequently, organizations try to develop collaborative plans simply by gathering all the parties around the table and "hammering it out." Unfortunately, the plans created with this kind of approach often meet with little success during the implementation stage, or there is not enough substance to sustain the collaborative efforts during long-term operational periods.

The purpose of these materials is to steer you through a process for developing collaborative strategies to enhance transitioning adult students from individual tutoring to more structured instructional environments. It is important to note that this handbook describes a process rather than the process. Flexibility is key. Each state is different, as are the potential collaborative partners. Developing a successful plan requires adapting the suggested process steps where appropriate.

Since the potential partners may have different perceptions of what is needed, different priorities and resources, and different ways of operating, it is essential to use an objective approach to developing a plan to collaborate. This allows the partners to remain focused on the desired outcome while providing a framework to overcome the inevitable obstacles. The format in this guidebook also encourages the partners to be creative and innovative in their planning efforts. "Stepping out of the familiar" will often help you find more effective ways to serve the needs of your adult students..

Getting Started

If you or your organization want to develop a collaborative partnership with other organizations to develop or improve transition strategies that move adult students from one instructional environment to another, you must first identify the potential partners.

Questions to Guide You

What organizations or agencies in your state provide one-on-one literacy instruction through volunteers?

Laubach?
LVA?
Churches?
CBOs?
Libraries?
Others?

An excellent resource for this question could be your state and/or local literacy councils. These councils usually have comprehensive lists of all organizations that provide this service.

Are there any organizations or agencies that have expressed an interest in working with your organization?

Are there any organizations or agencies that have expressed concerns about the transition process for their adult students?

What organizations or agencies might represent a potential "natural link" to your organization's programs and services?

Who else (organizations, agencies or individuals) might have knowledge or experience that would be beneficial in your efforts to develop collaborative transition partnerships?

When the potential partners have been contacted and have agreed to meet to explore the possibilities of enhancing transitions, you are ready to begin the actual process of developing a plan. It isn't until the end of the process that a real partnership exists. At that time, members will clearly understand:

- the role each has to play;
- the resources each will contribute; and
- the way the transition will work.

When everyone agrees to the proposed plan and commits to it, the partnership is cemented. But how do you develop a plan that promotes commitment from the partners? By using a structured process.

DEVELOPING THE VISION

The best place to begin is at the end. Think of the process as a trip you want to take. You must first decide where you're going, then determine the best way to get there.

In this strategic planning process, you begin by having the partners describe their "vision" of the desired outcome. The diagram at the end of this guide and the guidelines below give you a framework for structuring this exercise and capturing the results. It also allows all partners to contribute their perspective to the process.

EXERCISE 1

DEVELOPING THE VISION

Instructions:

1. Make copies of the Developing The Vision page and hand it out to all partners.

2. Ask them to work independently at first and write down their descriptions of the "ideal" transition strategy. This is an "anything goes" description. Encourage people to dream, to focus on the ideal without regard for potential obstacles.

3. Use the following questions as a guide in developing the vision.

Questions to Guide You

A. What will this transition look like from the adult student's perspective?

B. What will it look like from your organization's or agency's perspective?

C. How will an adult student move through this transition from one type of instruction to another?

D. What are the elements that need to be incorporated to promote a successful transition strategy?

EXERCISE 2

SHARING THE VISION

Once everyone has completed individual descriptions, the next step is to share the descriptions with the other partners. This process provides an opportunity for all members of the group to increase their understanding of their partners' priorities, values, operations and resources.

One person (preferably someone not involved in the planning process) needs to be recording the information on an overhead transparency or flip chart. There will be one or two "sheets" for each organization and several pages describing the process from the adult student's perspective, since each member was asked to describe this perspective in addition to his/her own.

NOTE: Group members may ask questions to clarify description, but there should be no negative feedback or reactions at this particular point in the process. Thus far, the process has been designed to promote creativity and innovation with no regard to possible obstacles. Partners should be describing an "ideal" program. Reality factors will be introduced later.

EXERCISE 3

CREATING A COMMON VISION

Now that all perspectives have been presented, the partners can begin to create a group vision that combines the separate descriptions. Use the format below to guide you.

A. What are the elements or priorities that are most common to all the perspectives?

B. What innovative ideas or approaches have real potential for being included into a strategy?

C. Which elements are crucial to the transition strategy's success [illegible] by law?

E. How can the various "visions" be combined to incorporate the essential components?

Use the questions above as a basis for creating a desired outcome description on which the partners can reach a preliminary agreement.

Developing the Plan

With the preliminary desired outcome determined, the focus now turns to developing an actual plan that will transform it from a vision into a reality. A detailed action plan is the vehicle for accomplishing the transformation. A truly successful action plan for a transition strategy will be based on lessons learned by others, best practices and in-depth knowledge of what would work best in your state or area.

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EXERCISE 4

DEVELOPING GOALS, OBJECTIVES & ACTIVITIES

Step 1: Develop overall goals for your strategy.

What are the major elements that must be achieved for the strategy to be successfully implemented?

[Think of the elements as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. When all of the pieces are put together correctly, a complete picture is created. These goals - or pieces of the puzzle - reflect major areas that are critical for the program's success. For example, you might have Funding, Program Devel op ment, Recruitment, Coordination, etc. as the major areas for your plan.]

The group as a whole should determine the major areas - or "ingredients" - essential to your transition strategy. If possible, try to limit the major areas to five or six. Otherwise, the process and the plan can become too cumbersome.

For each major area, the partners should develop a goal statement that describes the specific result to be achieved. For instance, a goal for Recruitment might be:

GOAL

To involve all volunteer agencies that operate at the local level.

Or, you might want to make your goal statement broader:

A mechanism will be in place to enlist the participation of appropriate agencies or entities operating at the local level in a statewide transition strategy.

To do this exercise, you might consider breaking up the main planning group into smaller groups and assigning each group one or two of the major areas. These smaller groups can then develop the goal statements and bring them before the whole group for discussion and alteration where necessary.

When the group has agreed on the goal statements and their wording, you are ready to move to the next step.

Step 2: Develop Objectives to Support the Goals.

In this step, the focus should be on deciding what the partners must do or what must happen in order for the goals to be achieved. How do you bring about this goal? Again, if you think of the goal as the destination of a trip, then the objectives and the activities that support them should answer the question: How do we get there?

Goals are generally very broad. In order to make them happen, you have to break them down into smaller, more manageable pieces. Objectives and the activities described in Step 3 serve this purpose.

Using the goal statement developed in Step 1, for example, you might develop the following objective:

Objective 1

Create a Strategy to Promote Statewide Local-Level Participation

You might have two objectives; you might have six. However, when all of these objectives are accomplished, the goal will become a reality. Try to avoid making the objectives too large or too complicated. Again, the focus is on

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what specific results must be accomplished in order to achieve the goal.

Step 3: Develop activities to achieve the objectives.

The purpose of this step is to determine the actual activities that must be conducted - the action plan. If you still use the example of the jigsaw puzzle, then you are breaking the big picture down into smaller and smaller pieces.

Key Concept:

Planning is done from the top down - from general to specific. Implementation is done from the bottom up -from specific to general

An activity that will help achieve the objective used as an example in Step 2 might be:

Activity

Identify all volunteer entities operating at the local level throughout the state.

As the smaller pieces are put together, the whole picture begins to emerge.

Points To Guide Activity Development

As you are working on Step 3, remember that activities need to be very specific. They must reflect a specific action that will be taken. One way to help ensure this is to begin each activity description with an action verb - appoint, list, contact, write, develop, meet, compile, devise, conduct, create, coordinate, interview, survey, design, incorporate, etc.

To emphasize the need for progress, it is usually a good idea to put a time frame on objectives and activities. Time frames help you organize resources and schedules, as well as motivate you to maintain momentum.

Try to avoid using vague words or words that have multiple meanings to the participating partners. If the activities are clearly stated, then they are easier to achieve.

Refining the Plan

Up to this point in the process, you've been encouraged not to "critique" the goals, objectives and activities - for a good reason. It is much too easy to get bogged down on details or words when going through these steps. That impedes progress. Discussing the negative aspects of a group member's suggestion has a tendency to throw cold water on the creative process and reduce the amount of participation. This can be deadly to the strategy's success.

Another advantage of waiting until this point to identify and discuss problem areas is that group members will usually see the difficulties involved in some of their suggestions, or the impracticality, and voluntarily withdraw the suggestion or work to make it acceptable.

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EXERCISE 5

IDENTIFYING AND HANDLING OBSTACLES

As a group, you need to analyze the transition strategy's action plan to identify areas of potential difficulty. By identifying potential obstacles before implementing the strategy, you can:

Make adjustments to the action plan;

Devise strategies to eliminate or reduce the obstacles; and

Decide in advance how to handle them if and when they arise.

By taking the time up front to identify obstacles and decide how they will be handled, you can greatly reduce - and quite often eliminate - the negative effect they would have on the transition strategy.

Questions To Guide You

Are there any laws and/or regulations that could negatively affect the objectives and activities in your plan?

Could any of the parts of the plan be affected by limited resources?

Are there any environmental factors that could have a negative impact on your plan? ("Environmental factors" include governing boards, political considerations, physical space, staff, etc.)

What problems does each partner think will be encountered in implementing the plan?

What steps could be taken or strategies devised to reduce or eliminate the obstacles?

EXERCISE 6

REFINING THE PLAN

When you have completed the previous exercises, you should have a relatively substantial transition strategy that incorporates creative innovations and the elements for success. It should also be one that is responsive to the diverse perspectives of the partnering entities. Now it's time to do a "reality check" on your strategy.

Completing the plan allows you to see the big picture, and the elements of the plan can be analyzed against this context. Your initial plan won't be perfect, but it will give you the "raw material" to fine tune into a successful strategy.

As you did in Exercise 5, the group needs to analyze the plan. This time, however, you're looking at it with an eye for items or areas that need improving.

Questions To Guide You

Are there any objectives and activities that are impractical, impossible or unrealistic? If so, can they be altered to incorporate their positive points?

Are there any objectives or activities that are unclear?

Are there any words or terms that need clarifying?

Are there any gaps in the plan?

Are there any goals or objectives with insufficient supporting steps?

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EXERCISE 7

MAKING OPERATIONAL DECISIONS

With the plan now complete in terms of the actions that must be taken to achieve the transition strategy, you need to turn your attention to the "nuts and bolts." Ask the following questions about each activity in the plan:

Who will have the responsibility for seeing that this activity is completed within the stated time frame?

What resources are needed to accomplish each objective/activity?

Staff?

Facilities?

Funds?

Materials?

External support?

You also need to determine how the group will measure or keep track of the implementation progress. Will you meet on a regular basis? Exchange progress reports?

Please note that it is essential that you have in place a method for maintaining constant and open communications among the participating entities. Problems will inevitably arise, and good communications will prevent the molehills from becoming mountains.

Congratulations! You have completed the planning process for developing or enhancing a transition strategy. Here are the steps you've gone through:

Determining the desired outcome - the transition strategy that will work best for your state or agency.

Developing the goals that must be achieved to make the strategy an reality.

Breaking the goals down into more manageable objectives and activities.

Determining the specific activities that must be accomplished.

Identifying the obstacles that may be encountered and devising a strategy to handle them.

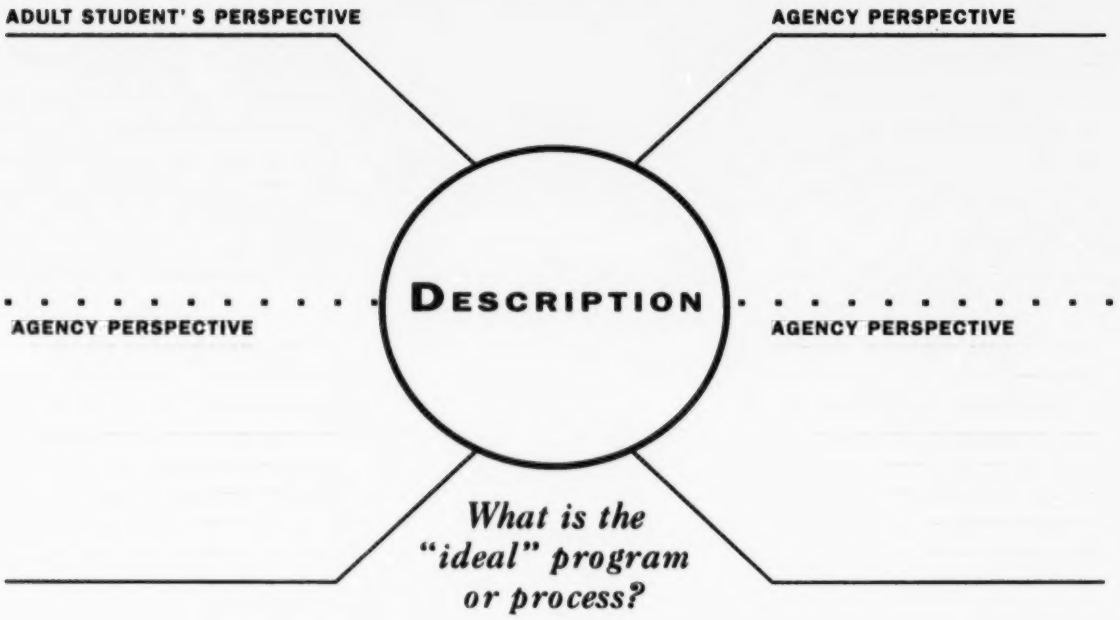
Determining the resources needed to implement the strategy.

Defining the role and responsibilities of each participating entity.

All you have to do now is implement the plan.

GOOD LUCK . . . but you don't need luck because you have a STRATEGIC PLAN!

DEVELOPING THE VISION



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Conclusions

In summary, there were several themes which ran throughout the project. These were that:

- The transition should be smooth and student-centered, with such features as a single or holistic assessment.
- There should be respect for the student, as well as mutual respect among agencies and organizations involved.
- Cooperation and collaboration among groups is paramount.
- A successful transition program includes program accountability.
- There should be an emphasis on staff development and lifelong learning.
- Instruction should be: learner centered; applicable; high quality; cutting edge. It should make use of available technology and be accelerated. Finally, it should be supported by case management, through learner/mentor support groups and through community/employer support.

Finally, a central theme of the Conference was the need for sustained follow- up efforts, especially at the regional, state and local level. Conference attendees expressed an interest in participating in future activities that focused on the issue of building better partnerships between literacy volunteer and adult education programs. In response to suggestions made during the Conference, the Department of Education and the National Alliance of Business will conduct a series of Regional Workshops in early 1995 on the issue of adult literacy transitions. The Workshops will be held in selected cities across the country and will provide adult education and literacy practitioners the opportunity to strengthen the partnerships that were formed during the national conference in Washington. These Workshops will focus specifically on transition strategies at the regional and state levels and will continue the strategic planning process for developing transition strategies for learners in adult education and literacy programs.

Mission Statement

We will have in place a system of Literacy/Adult Education with open lines of communication among all providers, which will enable and empower students to receive the instructional and support services appropriate to their identified and expanding goals and needs.

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